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America's Role in a Turbulent World

President Carter at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta on February 20.

I remember when I first came to Tech, the entire world was at war. Our nation was under attack on two fronts and was desperately gearing up for a total war effort that we had not known since we fought each other in the 1860's.

In 1942-43, it was not yet a time for victories for the United States nor for our allies, and many people feared that Western democracies might be overwhelmed. We now face a very different world from the world in which I came of age. The old empires are gone, and the maps are covered with new and developing nations with names that we had then never heard.

But one thing has not changed as much as I had hoped. It is still a world of danger, a world in which democracy and freedom are still challenged, a world in which peace must be rewon day by day.

Too many people still lack the simplest necessities of life, and too many are deprived of the most basic human rights. As the events of recent days have shown, peace remains a fragile thing, vulnerable to assaults from all sides.

Disturbances in Iran, the western Indian Ocean, and in Southeast Asia are a challenge to our determination and our leadership. They underscore the importance of strength in our

national defenses, wisdom in our diplomacy, and steadfastness in the pursuit of arms control and peace.

I want to speak to you today about America's purpose in this world of change and turbulence.

Ever since the end of the Second World War, the United States has been the leader in moving our world closer to a stable peace and genuine security. We have the world's strongest economy; we have the world's strongest military forces; and we share burdens of mutual defense with friends abroad whose security and prosperity are as vital to us as to themselves.

With our strong allies, we have succeeded in preventing a global war for more than one-third of a century—the longest period of general peace in modern times. And as President of the United States, I am determined to keep our nation at peace.

We help to sustain a world trading and monetary system that has brought greater prosperity to more of the world's people than ever before in history.

We are working to resolve conflicts among other nations so that each can develop its own future in independence and peace. And we have helped to maintain the conditions in which more than 100 new nations have come into being and in which human hope—and its

fulfillment—has taken a revolutionary leap forward.

In short, we in the United States provide the bedrock of global security and economic advance in a world of unprecedented change and conflict. In such a world America has four fundamental security responsibilities: to provide for our own nation's strength and safety; to stand by our allies and our friends; to support national independence and integrity of other nations; and to work diligently for peace.

We do not oppose change. Many of the political currents sweeping the world express a desire that we share—the desire for a world in which the legitimate aspirations of nations and individuals have a greater chance for fulfillment.

The United States cannot control events within other nations. A few years ago, we tried this and we failed. But we recognized as inevitable that the uncertainty and the turmoil that come with change can have its darker side as well. We saw this in a senseless act of violence last week in Afghanistan, when a brave and good man—Ambassador Adolph Dubs—gave his life in the performance of his duty as a representative of the United States. As we meet here today at Georgia Tech—enjoying the blessings of freedom and peace—we must remember that we are indebted for those blessings to the sacrifice of men and women like Spike Dubs.

We also see the darker side of change when countries in turbulence provide opportunities for exploitation by the outsiders who seek not to advance human aims but rather to extend their own power and their own position at the expense of others.

Iran

As I speak to you today, the country of Iran—with which we have had close relations for the last 30 years—is in revolution. It has been our hope that Iran could modernize without deep internal conflicts, and we sought to encourage that effort by supporting its government, by urging internal change toward progress and democracy, and by helping to provide a background of regional stability.

The revolution in Iran is a product of deep social, political, religious, and economic factors growing out of the history of Iran itself. Those who argue that the United States should or could intervene directly to thwart these events are wrong about the realities of Iran. So, too, are those who spout propaganda that protecting our own citizens is tantamount to direct intervention.

We have not and we will not intervene in Iran, yet the future of Iran continues to be of deep concern to us and to our friends and allies. It is an important nation in a critical part of the world; an immediate neighbor of the Soviet Union; a major oil producer that also sits beside the principal artery for most of the world's trade in oil. And it is still a significant potential force for stability and progress in the region.

Iran is a proud nation with a long history—more than 2,000 years—of struggle to establish and to guarantee its own freedom. The independence of Iran is also in our own vital interest and in the interest of our closest allies, and we will support the independence of Iran.

Out of today's turmoil, it is our hope that these troubled people will create a stable government which can meet the needs of the Iranian people and which can enable that great nation not only to remain independent but to regain its internal strength and balance.

We are prepared to support that effort as appropriate and to work with the Iranian Government and the people as a nation, which shares common interests and common aspirations with us.

But just as we respect Iran's independence and integrity, other nations must do so as well. If others interfere, directly or indirectly, they are on notice that this will have serious consequences and will affect our broader relationships with them.

Middle East

At the same time, we are intensifying our efforts to promote stability throughout the Middle East so that the security and the independence of the nations of that part of the world will be maintained.

At my direction, the Secretary of Defense recently carried out comprehensive consultations in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia concerning the security of that region. We are determined to work with these nations and with others to put the peaceful development of the region on a sound and a lasting foundation.

Recent disturbances in the region have underlined the need to work even more urgently toward peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. To this end, Israeli and Egyptian negotiators—the Foreign Ministers of both countries—will return to Camp David tonight at the invitation of the United States.

They will be meeting with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. And I myself will do whatever I can to promote the success of the Camp David negotiations. And if it should be necessary, and the parties show adequate flexibility, I will call another summit conference to work for peace. I urge all leaders throughout the Middle East to recognize the vital importance for their region for these talks to succeed.

Southeast Asia

For us in the United States, any crisis in the Middle East has the most immediate and serious consequences. But we are also deeply concerned by what is happening now in Southeast Asia. The same principles of American policy apply: We support the independence and integrity of the regional nations; we will stand by our friends; and we will continue as a nation to work for peace.

Just in the last few weeks we have seen a Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and, as a result, a Chinese frontier penetration into Vietnam. Both actions threaten the stability of one of the world's most important and promising regions—Southeast Asia.

We have opposed both military actions. Let me outline very briefly the principles that govern our conduct.

First, we will not get involved in conflict between Asian Communist nations. Our national interests are not directly threatened,

although we are concerned, of course, at the wider implications of what might happen in the future and what has been happening in the past.

We have been using whatever diplomatic and political means are available to encourage restraint on all parties and to seek to prevent a wider war. While our influence is limited because our involvement is limited, we remain the one great power in all the world which can have direct and frank discussions with all the parties concerned. For this reason, we have a useful and important role to play in the restoration of stability. We will continue our efforts, both directly with the countries involved and through the United Nations, to secure an end to the fighting in the region, to bring about a withdrawal of Vietnam forces from Cambodia and of Chinese forces from Vietnam, and to gain the restoration of the independence and integrity of all nations involved.

At the same time, we are continuing to express our deep concern that this conflict may widen still further—with unforeseen and grave consequences for nations in the region and also beyond.

In any event, the United States is fully prepared to protect the vital interests of our people wherever they may be challenged. We are in close consultation with our friends and allies in the region, especially the members of the Association of South East Asian Nations—the ASEAN nations. Their continued stability and prosperity are of great importance to us.

The normalization of relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China is already an accomplished fact and will not be reversed. This was the simple, long-overdue recognition of the reality of the government in Peking.

In the last few days, we have consulted directly with leaders around the world—and with our own congressional leaders as well—about events both in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The responsibilities that we face are serious, and they are shared by the Administration and the Congress, by our nation and our allies—and our common under-

standing and our adherence to a common cause are vital.

All of us know that the internal affairs of Iran or combat even among Communist nations are of concern to us. Many nations are troubled—even threatened—by the turmoil in Southeast Asia and in the Middle East. To stand by our friends and to help meet their security needs in these difficult times, I will consult with the Congress to determine what additional military assistance will be required. This added measure of support is crucial for stability throughout the Indian Ocean area. And let me repeat, in the Middle East, in Southeast Asia, and elsewhere in the world, we will stand by our friends, we will honor our commitments, and we will protect the vital interests of the United States, and you can depend on it.

U.S. Security and SALT

As we face this immediate series of crises, we also look constantly to the broader needs of security. If we are to meet our responsibilities, we must continue to maintain the military forces we need for our defense and to contribute to the defense of our allies. This year, I have proposed a substantial real increase in the defense budget. The events of recent weeks underscore the responsibility of the Congress to appropriate these funds in full.

There must be no doubt that the people of the United States are fully prepared to meet our commitments and to back up those commitments with military strength.

Turmoil and crisis also underscore the vital needs to work wherever possible, to stabilize and to reduce competition in strategic nuclear weapons.

This effort has the same ultimate goals as does our strong defense: the goals of security, stability, and peace. In pursuit of these goals, our nation faces no more important task this year than the successful conclusion of a strategic arms limitation agreement.

Just as we work to support national independence and to aid our friends and allies in times of trial, we must work to regulate nu-

clear arms capable of threatening life throughout this planet. For a SALT agreement is a fundamental element of strategic and political stability in a turbulent world—stability which can provide the necessary political basis for us to contain the kinds of crises that we face today and to prevent their growing into a terrible nuclear confrontation.

After more than six years of negotiations, conducted by three different Presidents, agreement has now been reached on most of the major components of a sound and verifiable SALT II treaty.

The emerging agreement will establish for the first time equal numbers of strategic arms for both sides. It will thus reverse the Soviet's numerical advantage which was temporarily established in the SALT I treaty of 1972, when they had about a 40 percent built-in negotiated advantage.

To reach these new levels, the Soviets will be required to reduce their overall number of strategic arms. Over 250 Soviet missiles or bombers—about 10 percent of their strategic forces—will have to be destroyed or dismantled. At the same time, because we are now well below the agreed ceiling, we could substantially increase our own operational strategic forces.

The SALT II agreement will also provide negotiated limits on building new types of weapons and limits on the improvement of existing ones—the so-called qualitative arms race can be controlled.

SALT II will limit the size of land-based missiles and the number of warheads that can be placed on them. Without these limits, the Soviets could vastly increase the number of warheads on their large land-based missiles, with grave implications to the strategic balance.

SALT II will, therefore, contribute to our ability to deal with the growing vulnerability of our land-based missiles. Without it, the Soviet Union could continue to increase the number of their warheads, tending to nullify our effort to protect our missiles.

The agreement will also permit us and our allies to pursue all the defense programs that we believe might eventually be needed—the

M-X missile; the Trident submarine and its missiles; air-, ground-, and sea-launched cruise missiles; cruise missile carrier aircraft; and a new penetrating bomber. These would be permitted.

Thus SALT II would allow our own prudent programs to move ahead and also will place important limits on what the Soviets might otherwise do. And this SALT II agreement will be a basis for further negotiations for additional substantial cuts in the level of nuclear armaments.

Without the SALT II agreement, the Soviet Union could have nearly one-third more strategic forces by 1985 than with SALT II. We would, of necessity, as a nation, match such a buildup. The costs would be enormous, the risks self-evident. And both nations would wind up less secure.

The stakes in SALT are too high to rely on trust. Any SALT II treaty that I sign will be adequately verifiable, using our own independent means of guaranteeing Soviet compliance with terms of the agreement.

SALT II will specifically forbid any interference that would impede our ability to verify compliance with the treaty. Any effort on the part of the Soviet Union to interfere with our verification activities would be a detectable violation of the agreement itself and an early signal of any possible cheating.

Finally, let me put this agreement in the context of our overall relations with the Soviet Union and the turbulence that exists in many parts of the world. The question is not when SALT can be divorced from this complicated context. It cannot. As I have often said, our relationship with the Soviet Union is a mixture of cooperation and competition. And as President of the United States, I have no more difficult and delicate task than to balance these two. I cannot and I will not let the pressures of inevitable competition overwhelm

possibilities for cooperation any more than I will let cooperation blind us to the realities of competition, which we are fully prepared to meet.

Because this carefully negotiated and responsible arms control agreement will make the world safer and more secure, it is in our national interest to pursue it, even as we continue competition with the Soviet Union elsewhere in the world. Therefore, I will seek both to conclude this new SALT agreement and to respond to any Soviet behavior which adversely affects our interests.

To reject SALT II would mean that the inevitable competition in strategic nuclear arms would grow even more dangerous. Each crisis, each confrontation, each point of friction—as serious as it may be in its own right—would take on an added measure of significance and an added dimension of danger, for it would occur in an atmosphere of unbridled strategic competition and deteriorating strategic stability. It is precisely because we have fundamental differences with the Soviet Union that we are determined to bring this dangerous dimension of our military competition under control.

In today's world, it is vital to match the pursuit of ideals with the responsible use of force and of power. The United States is a source of both—ideals and power. Our ideals have inspired the world for more than two centuries; and for three generations, since World War II, our power has helped other nations to realize their own ideals.

The determination and strength of purpose of the American people are crucial for stability in a turbulent world. If we stand together in maintaining a steady course, America can protect its principles and interests and also be a force for peace. Americans have always accepted the challenge of leadership, and I am confident that we will do so now.

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